



January 4, 2026

UNITED - Ephesians 6:14-15 - Being Ready

SUMMARY: You don't gear up once the battle starts. You put it on now, or you bleed. So what is the gear? How do we prepare for battle and not find we walked piece by piece through what it means to stand.

The belt of truth keeps a life together. In the ancient world you'd "gird up your loins" so you wouldn't trip—truth does that for the soul. Lies aren't neutral; they rewire reality. Believe a lie about your spouse and it will change your home. Believe a lie marketed for profit (think OxyContin) and communities pay. In a world of influencers, spin, and weaponized narratives, we need a wise information diet. I won't deep-dive fads. I want to be useful where I can actually act. I avoid demagogic voices, follow the money, and ask whether this input helps me love my neighbor and remember the spiritual battle. Community matters too. The Asch experiments showed that one honest voice can help another person tell the truth. Wear the belt of truth; be that voice.

Then the breastplate of righteousness. Righteousness means a life examined and approved by a higher authority. Every human heart aches for that. If my "rightness" rests on my performance, I ride a roller coaster. If it rests on people's approval, they own me. God gives a better way: imputed righteousness. Jesus aced the wilderness, the trials, the cross—and He credits His record to us. That breastplate protects the heart so we don't start starved for approval; we start full. Martin Luther prayed, "Jesus, I am your punishment and you are my reward." When the enemy condemns, we answer with 1 John 3:20 and Colossians 3:3—my life is hidden with Christ in God. I don't preach, parent, or work to get approval; I move from approval. That shift reframes everything: obedience flows from love, difficulty becomes formation, and we carry a humble swagger—Jesus for me, in me, and through me, in spite of me.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 6:14-18, 1 John 3:20, Colossians 3:3

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. **Identify one lie you currently believe about yourself, your spouse, your work, or your reputation. What specific behavior or decision in the past month shows that you believe that lie? What is one truthful statement (from Scripture or gospel reality) you can say this week to counter it?**
2. **Audit your information diet this week: name three regular sources you check (social media accounts, news outlets, podcasts). For each, write one sentence about whether it tends to inform or to inflame you. Pick one source to stop following or to limit for the next 30 days and explain why.**
3. **Think of a relationship where you feel driven by approval (boss, parent, friend, social circle). What is one small boundary you can set this week that would reduce people-pleasing (e.g., say "no" to a request, refrain from seeking feedback, delay responding until you pray)?**



4. Write a one-sentence identity reminder based on imputed righteousness (for example: “I am examined and approved in Christ; his righteousness covers me”). Put that sentence somewhere you will see it each morning. What difference do you expect that short practice to make in how you face criticism this week?
5. Name one tangible local need (a neighbor, school, foster care, food pantry, workplace issue) the pastor suggested you can affect. What is one concrete action you will take in the next 7 days to serve or help there?
6. Pastor Matt spoke about prayer and fasting as part of readiness. Will you try a short fast or an extended time of focused prayer in the next month? If yes, what will you fast from and when will you schedule the time to pray?
7. Who in your small group, family, or workplace needs one honest voice to help them tell the truth (the Asch example)? Identify that person or situation and commit to one truthful, loving thing you will say or do to help them stand.